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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted in May 1982 by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges to learn how student support services were used to encourage students to enroll in transfer programs and to facilitate student progress toward a degree. Counseling services at 34 community colleges in 6 multi-campus, urban districts were studied with respect to articulation programs and activities with neighborhood high schools, 4-year colleges, and universities; new student orientation; use of placement or assessment tests; academic counseling services; programs to monitor academic progress; career counseling and job placement services; and follow-up studies of transfer students or job placement. The study indicated: (1) all but 1 of the 34 colleges indicated that they had procedures linking them with surrounding high schools; (2) all but one of the colleges administered placement tests or assessment tests to advise students into the appropriate class level, and more than 75% of the colleges made assessment tests mandatory under certain conditions; (3) over 60% of the colleges indicated that academic advising was mandatory for at least some categories of students; (4) a great variation was found in faculty participation in academic advisement; (5) one district and three other campuses had programs to monitor students' academic progress; and (6) career counseling and job placement services were provided at all campuses. (KL)

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COUNSELING SERVICES TO FACILITATE TRANSFER

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BULLETIN

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Counseling Services To Facilitate Transfer

In the past fifteen years community colleges have attracted a broad range of non-traditional students by offering courses at night and in off-campus locations, allowing students to withdraw from classes at any time without penalty, and conducting recruitment campaigns to lure people who otherwise might not consider going to college. Nationwide, the majority of students are part-timers who do not graduate or transfer to four-year institutions.

Reliable data about the exact number of transfer students are difficult to obtain, largely due to the fact that many colleges count as a transfer anyone who is taking a course that carries transfer credit. Better documented, however, is a decline in the percentage of students who ultimately transfer from community colleges to universities. While the actual number of transfer students has increased, the percentage of full-time students attending community colleges in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree has shrunk. Legislators and commentators continue to raise questions about the high incidence of dropout and the low proportion of program completions.

Illustration: Bill Cohen

Why do so few students progress through the college to earn a degree? One of the reasons is that the swelled enrollments resulting from recruitment drives include a large number of students who demonstrate only a casual commitment to college studies or who feel they can attain their goals without the degree. However, the attrition rate in the transfer programs is also high, and this may have less to do with personal commitment than with the kinds of counseling and guidance the students receive toward clarifying and attaining their academic and career goals.

In May 1982, CSCC staff members conducted a survey of counseling services at 34 community colleges in the six districts that are participating in both the Mellon project to advance the liberal arts and the Ford project to facilitate student progress. The objective of this survey was to learn how support services are utilized to encourage students to enroll in transfer programs and to facilitate student progress toward a degree. The survey was conducted by telephone with the Dean of Student Services or the Director of Counseling in all but one of the six districts, City Colleges of Chicago, which chose to have one administrator collect information from each of its eight colleges and present one written response to the survey questionnaire. The structured interview contained questions about nine program areas usually found under the auspices of Student Services. These areas include: programs and activities that link the college with its neighborhood high schools, new student orientation, use of placement or assessment tests, academic counseling services, programs to monitor academic progress, career counseling and job placement services, programs that link the college with four-year colleges and universities, and follow-up studies of student transfers and job placement.

College-High School Link

All but one of the 34 participating colleges indicated they had procedures to link the college with its surrounding high schools. Counseling staff were responsible for providing some of the services at thirty of the thirty-three colleges. Faculty involvement, while indicated at twenty-nine institutions, was generally informal or voluntary. Several interviewees noted that faculty in the technical or occupational programs carried out recruiting activities, but these activities were usually independent of Counseling Center programs.

The American College Testing Career Planning Program (ACT/CPP), first used by four of the Dallas Community College District colleges in 1980-81, was self-identified as an exemplary outreach program. As a career planning inventory, it was designed to identify clusters of interests, experience, and ability to enable students to make well informed career decisions. The Dallas colleges administered the test to high school juniors and seniors; sessions were then scheduled with the students and their parents to interpret the results. The findings were used to locate students' career interests within eight job categories, such as Health Services, or Trades, Crafts and Industries. The inventory was administered and interpreted just before students attended on-campus college recruitment. The Dalias colleges have found the ACT/CPP program to be an effective career guidance tool as well as an excellent recruitment device.

Some colleges provide services or use of campus facilities to high school students in order to make the college more visible. The ACT study sessions provided by the counseling staff at South Mountain Commuity College in the Maricopa District represent one example. In the same district, Mesa Community College makes available campus facilities for both the Summer Youth Employment Program and the High School Drop-Out program to encourage college attendance by students from populations that traditionally have had low college representation. In an effort to recruit students at the other end of the academic spectrum, Miami-Dade instituted the High School Achievement Award as part of its Emphasis on Excellence program. Students in the top ten percent of their high school graduating class are eligible to receive the scholarships as long as they maintain a required minimum grade point average at the college.

Illustration: Bill Cohen

New Student Orientation

All but four of the participating colleges have an orientation program for new students. Twelve of the thirty colleges that offer these programs mandate attendance, but the requirement is frequently qualified by conditions such as "if a student is enrolling for six or more units and is attending college for the first time." Eight institutions estimated new student attendance for their programs at 75 to 100 percent of the new enrollees, while twelve colleges reported attendance by less than half the students. Several colleges reported high participation rates because they present their orientation programs as part of, or just prior to, the registration and assessment process.

While the CSCC survey did not question the content or length of the New Student Orientation programs, several college administrators offered descriptions. Mountain View College in Dallas has incorporated orientation into the academic structure by offering Human Development 100 as a mandatory course for all new full-time day students. The course is taught by counseling center staff with the intent of familiarizing students with the colleges' policies and procedures. Video presentations have been developed by both Los Angeles' West Los Angeles College and Maricopa's South Mountain Community College to convey their orientation message.

Placement and Assessment Tests

All but one of the colleges administer placement or assessment tests to assist in directing students to the appropriate

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Workshop Series Calendared

As part of its commitment to promote the liberal arts and to facilitate student transfer, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges will co-sponsor a series of workshops with the six community college districts participating in our Ford and Mellon studies. The objectives of this workshop series are to highlight exemplary programs and to offer a how-to program for college staff members who would like to institute similar projects on their own campuses. The Los Angeles Community College District will kick off the series this fall with a workshop focusing on Honors, Transfer, and Excellence. This will be held October 28th. Other workshop dates are now calendared as follows:

November 11-12, 1982	*ST. LOUIS:*	*The Liberal Arts Career Option*
January 24-25, 1983	*MARICOPA:*	*Interdisciplinary Studies*
February 17-18, 1983	*MIAMI-DADE:*	*Defining the Associate of Arts Degree*
March 25, 1983	*DALLAS:*	*Liberal Arts in Occupational Areas*
Late Spring, 1983	*CHICAGO:*	*Student Assessment*

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class level, and all of the 34 colleges used these tests in reading and writing. All but three of the colleges employ an assessment test in mathematics. Of the forty-four tests reported in use, eight were developed on the local campuses; all others were produced by nationally recognized agencies.

Most assessment tests are administered prior to or during registration in order to have the results available for the academic advising process. Both Dallas' Brookhaven College and Maricopa's South Mountain Community College reported that follow-up assessment sub-tests were administered in some academic areas once a class was underway in order more finely to determine a student's ability level.

More than three-fourths of the 34 colleges surveyed make assessment tests mandatory under certain conditions. New students are usually required to take the tests if they have enrolled in a minimum number of units or if they plan to enroll in a course in a specific academic area. Richland College, in the Dallas Community College District, allows students to bypass placement tests if they are willing to sign a waiver accepting full responsibility for their actions.

Academic Counseling Services

Over sixty percent of the participating colleges report that academic advising is mandatory either for all students, for students taking more than a certain number of units, or for all new students. Chicago is the only district requiring all students to receive academic advisement. Students attending any of the eight City Colleges of Chicago must have their program planning cards signed by a faculty advisor before they can register for the next term.

Similarly, South Mountain Community College in Maricopa reported that students must have an educational plan on file in the Counseling Office before they can register for classes. North Campus at Miami-Dade requires all students who have not yet declared a major to seek out academic advisory services. Both Maricopa's Phoenix College and Dallas' Richland College allow students to by-pass the academic advising requirement if they sign a waiver agreement accepting full responsibility for their decision.

Nearly every college keeps the counseling office open during the evening in order to reach part-time and evening students. Los Angeles' Pierce College reported that they have Peer Advisors visit certain evening classes per term to inform students of the kinds of evening services available to them. Dallas' Richland College sends letters to students describing the academic advising services available at the college after 4 p.m.

Faculty Advisors

Faculty members in the City Colleges of Chicago play an integral role in the academic advisement process. By requiring a faculty signature on students' academic programs, contact with faculty has become a viable part of the system. At other colleges, however, faculty participation was often described as being "more informal" and varied greatly in the degree to which it was coordinated with the academic advising services of the campus counseling center. In order to make use of the career information available from faculty in a given academic field, the Counseling Office at Los Angeles Pierce College contacted each department requesting the name of at least one faculty member who would be available to talk with students. Responses varied from department to department, with some supplying the

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name of one faculty contact while in others the whole department volunteered to provide referrals.

Faculty are directly involved in advising students during the registration process at Dallas' Mountain View, Forest Park in St. Louis, and Maricopa Technical. Most institutions reported that faculty members advise students majoring in their academic area. Well over half of the participating colleges (twenty-four) incorporate some type of faculty training program to prepare faculty for their academic advising responsibilities. Miami-Dade has developed a handbook to provide guidelines as has Maricopa's South Mountain, and Maricopa Technical.

Programs to Monitor Students Academic Progress

Miami-Dade clearly provides the leadership in this area with their "Academic Alert" and "Standards of Academic Progress" programs. Dallas has recently developed a district-wide committee to look into the Miami-Dade monitoring system, and Maricopa's Glendale Community College expressed interest in adopting certain features of the Miami-Dade system.

Three other campuses reported having some form of monitoring system other than providing a check of a transcript when a student files for a degree, or identifying students whose grade point average falls below a 2.0. Cedar Valley College in Lancaster, Texas has implemented a computerized "Early Warning System"; Los Angeles Southwest College has developed a pilot "Retention Program" which is run by its Counseling Center; and Forest Park in St. Louis has a computerized system in place to monitor student progress.

Career Counseling Services

Each of the colleges provides some form of career counseling. The service most often mentioned was providing credit courses in career counseling areas, such as career exploration at Maricopa's Mesa Community College, job interviewing skills at Maricopa's Phoenix College, career planning and resume writing at Meramec in St. Louis, individual counseling and testing at Richland College in Dallas, and occupational career choice at Eastfield College in Mesquite, Texas.

A computerized career information system is the other career service most often mentioned by administrators. The Los Angeles Community College District uses a system called EUREKA, while several other colleges mentioned the use of a system called SIGI (Florissant Valley in St. Louis and Miami-Dade's South Campus). Scottsdale Community College in Maricopa's district uses another system called the Guidance Information system.

Job Placement Services

All 34 campuses have job placement services available for their students. The colleges in the Dallas Community College District use a computerized placement service called CAPERS. This system allows a student instant access to over 3,000 listings of full and part-time jobs in the county-wide area. Letters were mailed to over 30,000 area employers describing the advantages of listing their job openings on the CAPERS system. The colleges report a good response from both employers and students.

Several campuses noted the importance of advisory councils in the occupational and vocational area in transmitting information about available jobs to the campus. Faculty in the technical-vocational areas were repeatedly singled out as being involved in the placement process. The New World campus at Miami-Dade has developed a Hotline service which lists local temporary jobs available to students.

Programs to Link Colleges with Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Several campuses have developed programs that bring representatives from four-year institutions to the campuses to meet with interested students. Included in this group are Los Angeles' Pierce, City, Southwest, and Valley Colleges; Forest Park in St. Louis; and Glendale Community College in Maricopa. Los Angeles Pierce College provides a weekly on-going group for students who plan to transfer to the local state college. Counselors from both Pierce and Cal State Northridge meet regularly with the student group in the Pierce Counseling Center.

Another kind of link with four-year institutions consists of programs that do not directly involve students, but do pave the way for an easier transition from one institution to another. For example, Loop College in Chicago is working with Roosevelt University to improve communication on the basic skills needed by student transfers. This effort is being coordinated by the College Board's Project Equality. In another effort, the City Colleges of Chicago are working with DePaul University to open communication on the university's expectations of CCC students. This is a Mellon Foundation-funded effort entitled Project Lodestar. In Los Angeles, the Tri-Valley Alliance is a group of two and four-year institutions located in the San Fernando Valley that meets regularly to discuss common concerns. Participating in this consortium are the presidents, deans of instruction and deans of student services from Los Angeles' Pierce, Valley and Mission Colleges.

Follow-up Studies of Transfers and Job Placement

How many of the 34 colleges carry out follow-up studies to determine how successful their students are in the four-year institutions to which they transfer or in the job market after leaving the community colleges? Our CSCC survey indicates that four of the District research offices have done such follow-up studies within the past few years: Chicago, Dallas, Maricopa and Miami-Dade. Several campuses noted that they relied on the data supplied by the four-year institutions which indicates the overall grade point average of the community college students in relation to university students.

The Los Angeles Pierce College Counseling Center carries out its own form of follow-up study of Pierce students who go on to local state colleges and universities. Students are asked how well prepared they felt to handle the academic work at the four-year institution. The responses are compiled by institution, presented in anecdotal form, and are available to students in the Counseling Center.

In the area of job placement, the Chicago District Research Office carried out a follow-up study, as did all three St. Louis district colleges. Additionally, the individual colleges of Dallas' North Lake, and Maricopa's Maricopa Technical and Phoenix Colleges also completed follow-up studies in student placement.